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ABSTRACT

The paper presents a model for the integrating classroom in accordance with Chapter 71A (which deals with bilingual education) and Chapter 766 (which mandates the provision of educational programs tailored to each student's special needs) of Massachusetts Legislation. Listed among goals for the model classroom are the following: to provide an environment where children with different cultures, languages, and learning styles can learn together; to provide an educational environment where there is community input; and to provide an environment where staff members are facilitated. Guidelines for the model are outlined, and rationales for each of the model's components are offered. (SBH)

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DESCRIPTIVE PRESENTATION OF A MODEL INTEGRATING CLASSROOM IN ACCORDANCE WITH CHAPTER 766 AND 71A

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I THE INTEGRATING CLASSROOM

A.COMPOSITION OF THE CLASS AND PERSONNEL

The following is a model for the Integrating Classroom in accordance with Chapter 71A and 766 of Mass. Legislation. The goals for this model classroom are:

1) to provide an environment where children with different cultures,languages and learning styles can learn together.

2) to provide an atmosphere which stresses recognition , acceptance and respect of these differences.

3) to provide a somewhat structured environment where sufficient flexibility is available so children will be able to make some decisions concerning their learning experiences.

4) to provide an educational environment where there is community input.

5) to provide an educational environment where children can develop to the best of their abilities and become bilingual.

6) to provide an environment where staff members are facilitators.

7) and to provide an environment where the underlying philisophy is that learning is a continuos process.

Rationales will be offered for all parts of the model but for the purpose of clarity the whole model will be presented first.

The following conditions are considered as given before children enter the model classroom:

1)Children attending have previously been in kindergarten where all other children spoke in the childs' vernacular and all instruction was given in the vernacular.

2) Children attending the classroom who have special needs have gone through a core evaluation and have been recommended for placement in a class where needed services can be provided by the use of a generic specialist.

3) The model corresponds to an elementary open classroom setting which roughly corresponds or includes grade levels 1-3.

4) The children attending will attend the same classroom for two or three years and are placed on a voluntary basis. Children have participated in the physical arrangement of the class.

A. COMPOSITION:

CHILDREN--

1) The class will be composed of a maximum of 20 children with an equal number of Spanish-speaking and English-speaking children.Children who have been diagnosed as having special needs will be within the maximum number of 10 children assigned to each language.

TEACHERS AND OTHER PERSONNEL--

1) Two fully bilingual teachers will be assigned.

It is required that they speak the language of the children (variations included).One of the bilingual teachers should be Puerto Rican(we're assuming the Spanish speakers are Puerto Rican) and the other American,but both must be bilingual.The importance of this cannot be over emphasized.

2)Two paraprofessionals from the childrens' respective communities.Each should speak the language of the children (meaning here the children from their own community).They must have sufficient training to work independently from the teachers and other personnel when it is required.

3)Two volunteers(aides) which would hopefully be parents of children who have special needs.Each should come from the communities and speak the language of that community. (One from each)

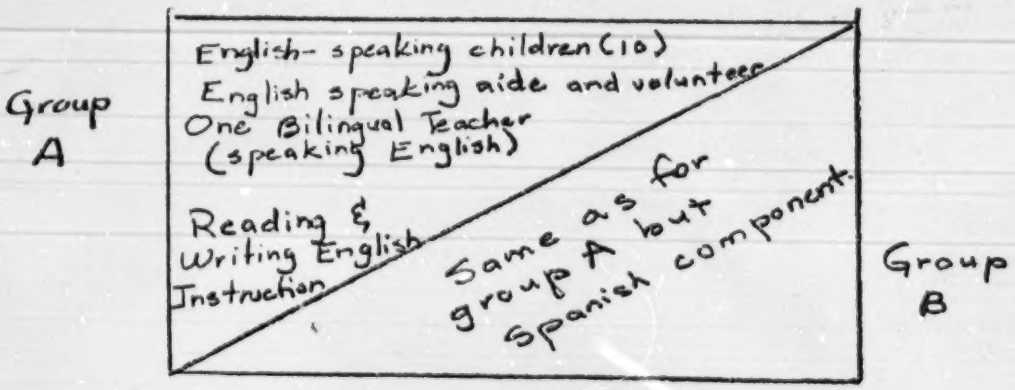
4) One generic specialist who would be a resource to the classroom team in diagnosing learning and behavioral functioning,prescribing instructional procedures and in evaluating student progress thru diagnostic teaching. The generic specialist would consult regularly with the team and help in the supervision of the paraprofessionala. The most important service this person will provide will be to help in the specifying the conditions under which a child is most likely to succeed in an instructional setting so that the classroom team can provide the most

appropriate setting for each child.

B.CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION:

The school day will have a variety of periods each with it's own organization in terms of children and staff, goals andmedium of instruction.Also this organization will vary as children progress in acquiring specific skills.

PHASE I. (period X)


Group A
English-speaking children (10)
English speaking aide and volunteer
One Bilingual Teacher (speaking English)
Reading & Writing English Instruction
Same as for group A but Spanish component.
Group B

1) The 10 children of a given language meet with one of the bilingual teachers who will speak only in their native tongue.With this teacher will be the paraprofessional and volunteer which corresponds to that language.

2) Reading and writing will take place during this period. Techniques and materials will be consistent with tne childrens needs.Instruction should be individualized and as varied as needed. Buddy systems should or could be created for children with special needs.

Section I

Period Y:

	Group I	Group II	Spanish Teacher Paraprofessional and Volunteer
Section II	½ group A } 10 ½ group B	½ group A } 10 children ½ group B	
Teacher, Paraprofessional and Volunteer English	Activities science social studies, etc math art music	Activities Same as Section I but in Spanish. Learning Centers in both.	

1) For the second period ½ of the children in one group will mix with ½ of the children in the other group in such a way that each group will now be composed of 5 Spanish speaking and 5 English speaking children. Each group will be with one of the two teachers and a wide variety of activities will be provided in each section thru the use of learning centers. The children will participate in a number of activities they select but they will be in one specific language for each of the two sections. The rest of the team will be working with the children as well as the teacher; each in the group with the appropriate teacher and language. So that during this period for example, section I will be in Spanish and all children in that section will be speaking in that language (to the best of their abilities) or at least participating in activites where everything is done in Spanish. The opposite will be true for section II.

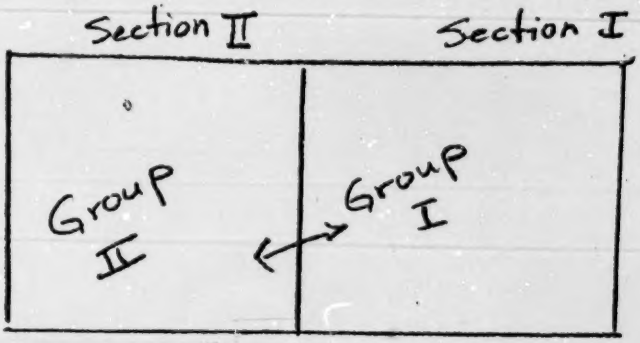
2) Activities will be provided so that childrens' special needs will be accounted for.

3) Complexity of activites will vary.The staff will be working with individual children or small groups.During Phase I this period as well as all the others except the first period will not involve written language.

4) Teachers must remember to be consistent and speak only in the language assigned to them during that period.

5) Children will be encouraged to participate in activities in small groups and use buddy systems which would have one English and one Spanish speaking child together. Specific activities would be provided for this purpose.

Period Z:



1) Groups will switch sections so that now the medium of instruction is the opposite of period y.

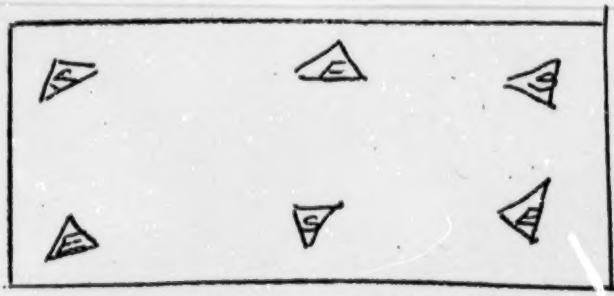
2)Periods y and z have the same amount of time.

3)Children will participate in a variety of activities thru the use of learning centers,group or individual sessions.

4) Again activities will be provided in each area in

varying degrees of difficulty or with special emphasis on some specific point, always providing for the child with special needs.

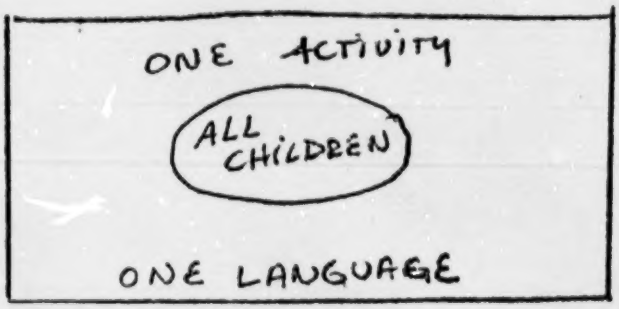
Free period:



Six Adults - six activities in two languages. Other activities thru learning centers.

1) This will be considered a free activities period where children may select that in which they wish to engage themselves in from numerous activities offered by the six adults in the class as well as any they wish to create, but it will be required that they select one in their second language.

Final Period:



1) All the children will be together and both teachers will speak the same language.

2) This period is for the group to participate as a whole and the language used will alternate each day.

PHASE II: Period X

As the children develop oral skills in their second language and master reading and writing in the vernacular, they will change teachers for period X and begin reading and writing skills in the second language.Teacher.paraprofessional and volunteer will work with the groups of 10 children until all have attained the mastery level needed to switch to the second language.

Remaining periods:

The same structure will be maintained but as children progress these periods will involve more written materials and activities will always reflect the variety of levels of competence the children have acquired. Individual help will be provided for all children according to their needs.

It should be emphasized that learning about the cultures involved will be a recurring theme in the activities provided.

Consulting with the Generic Specialist:

Both teachers will meet with the specialist so that the progress of children can be recorded and activities and materials planned to meet their needs. The specialist will provide ideas which the teachers will evaluate on the basis of each dhild;needs background,etc.Team work will be stresses. These meetings will be scheduled as often as needed.

Team work:

Teachers will meet weekly with the paraprofessionals and volunteers to discuss and record each childs' progress,discuss the childs' needs and coordinate activities and materials to be provided.All team members will participate in the discussions and preparation of materials. Activities for the learning centers are designed according to findings of periodic evaluations of the childrens' needs. These planning sessions will provide an opportunity for exchange of ideas among team members and should be a real learning experience for all those involved.

RATIONALES:

For given conditions:

The rationale for requiring a previous core evaluation for children with special needs seems obvious.If the proposed model is to succeed, children must be carefully diagnosed before entering the class so that planning and preparation of some of the materials can be done in advance.To determine which children should be placed so that the proposed ratio is maintained,evaluations must be done previous to class assignments.

The set-up proposed for the Kindergarten has some relation to the previous condition.Evaluations and placement of children who speak a language other than English has been extremely poor.One cause has been evaluation and testing instruments,but another has been misdiagnosis of a language problem.If children attend Kindergarten where only the vernacular is spoken we will rule out some of these possibilities. This specific arrangement will also facilitate early diagnosis of children with special needs. Data collection from parents which can be important in deagnosing difficulties can more easily be compiled by a well trained Kindergarten teacher who speaks the language of the children and parents and shares their cultural background. This teacher will also be in a better position to determine which behaviors are or could be indicative of a learning problem and which behaviors

are only idiosincracies of the components of a culture which might be misunderstood by another observer.

The rationale for having Kindergarten instruction in the vernacular is also proposed because of the soundness of this decision in terms of language learning and future reading instruction.This point will be brought up again when I detail the need for beginning reading instruction in the vernacular before going on to English or the second language. At this point it is sufficient to say that: "language is a medium of thought by which a person represents his experiences and reorganizes them into generalizations and concepts, which he can then through language communicate to others in his human society". (Goodman,1968) "By the time a child is of school age he has learned his language very well.He has a large vocabulary,he controls all the basic language structures and inflections, he uses language to communicate,to think and to learn." (Goodman,1968).

To divert the natural development of language and learning in a child by forcing a new language on him is a mistake.

The open classroom setting where children have participated in the physical arrangement of the room as well as in deciding the activities in which thay want to be involved,provides a setting where learning experiences

have a higher level of motivation because of their relevance to the child at a specific time.Childrens interest and background are taken into consideration in the planning as well as in the evaluation of activities and materials.

This classroom setting where children and staff move about freely are to me essential in providing an environment as natural as possible.It has frequently been observed that this offers a greater amount of free responses in children or at least less choral ones.

Maria Montessori had great sucess in utilizing open classroom techniques where children could naturally select their activities.The principle here is similar.Montessori facilitated learning by exposing children to an environment which was highly structured in planning and materials used but where the teacher became a facilitator and unobstrusive observer of the students activities.

In the same fashion Piaget is more concerned with what questions to ask;allowing children to provide explaantions to phenomena which would give us an indication of their thinking.This process is fundamental if we are interested in constant reevaluation of the learning process and wish to provide a stimulating environment.

According to Piaget the individual is constantly working towards achieving equilibrium between the environment and his/her internal structures.When an individual interacts with the world ,schemes or mental structures

develop to explain phenomena and these schemes which in reality structure our perceptions will affect our subsequent actions on new inputs from the environment. When the new data contradicts our schemas we experience disequilibrium. We deal with disequilibrium by trying to produce new ways in which to deal with whatever is confusing us in the environment.This is dome through the processes of assimilation and accomodation.The first allows us to add the new data to our present schemas; the second accomodates the pre-existing scheme to meet the demands of the new data.

An open classroom setting allows for this process to be best observed by the staff in their individual contacts with the child. This arrangement seems the most appropriate if our concern is not with teaching but with learning.

Rationale for the composition of the class:

By having an equal number of children who speak each of the two languages involved and which also includes children with special needs we deal with some of the following:

Children:

1) The ESL pull out program is eliminated.This program has always labelled the child who is linguistically different.The segregated class where all children speak only one language also has the disadvantage of

being labeled "special"and although it is often stated that Spanish is not given an inferior position or lesser importance, it is well known that as children develop skills in English they are "promoted " to a "regular" all-English class.The feeling that speaking Spanish makes one inferior is very real for children in many of these so called "bilingual " classrooms.In the model presented children don't "progress" to a "regular" classroom.Both groups are learning a new or second language and both are stressed as important. Since the children who speak English in the class are there voluntarily, as are the Spanish speaking,it is expected that the parents of the first consider bilingualism an asset and promote second language learning in their children. The interaction which takes place between children of both cultures will develop more positive attitudes between groups who are linguistically and culturally different. Children learn together about their own and the others' culture and have the benefit of being able to model the linguistic patterns and pronunciation of the second language from native speakers other than the staff. This will hopefully produce learning the second language at a faster rate than in a segregated class where children are modeling each others mistakes. A more positive self concept is also developed in children.

My experience has been that children who are in so called "bilingual" but segregated classrooms have a difficult time sharing with other children from the dominant culture.Some go as far as denying any knowledge of English for fear of being "promoted" to a classroom where all other children are Anglos.

The model tries to produce what is known as the pure bilingual classroom where there is an equal number of children who speak each language.In this model children are given instruction in communicative skills in their primary language and they than "share" their linguistic development.The objective is that all the children will become bilingual.(Beelar,1972)

The child who has special needs is serviced within an integrated setting where he/she is not segragated or labelled as different.He's not pulled out and made to feel inferior.This chils' self concept is much better off in this integrated class where his/her needs will be attended to and his academic achievement will probably be greater.

The class composition will hopefully promote a greater acceptance of individual differences in all children and a recognition of differences in learning and living styles so that attitudes can be modified.

As seen in this model children are not segregated within the classroom but are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities with many or few others as they prefer, as well as with the six team members.

Teachers and other personnel:

1) The balance in the teachers represents the balance of the languages spoken in the classroom.This is one way of recognizing equal importance to the two languages. By making sure that teachers speak and understand the distinct language of the child we can then expect the teacher to use the skills the child has to help him/her in the learning situation;specially in learning to read.Teachers must be sensitive to these language differences so that they can better understand childrens attempts to express themselves and will not confuse them of correct their speech.This would create insecurity in the child and may withdraw him from expressing his thoughts or from reading.

If the variety of the language spoken is not the same as the one the children speak of is spoken in their homes they may be made to feel that somehow the variety of their language is inferior.This was evident in Schultz's study (1975) where the fact that the Spanish speaking teachers were Argentinian and Mexican created a sense in the Puerto Rican children that their Spanish was inferior.

> "It is important that the variety of the language which the children speak be given equal value"
>
> (Schultz,1975)

Further support for the use cf fully bilingual teachers is found in Walsh (1974):

> "The teaching of school subjects through the non-English language should be done by native speakers of that language who have been educated through the medium of that language."

The use of paraprofessionals and volunteers who speak only one language will be explained more thoroughly at a later point.It is sufficient to say at this point that there is a tendency in teachers not to be consistent in the use

of a language and that the less personnel there is who will have to be conscious of this, the better it will be. Also, this way children will have more models for a given language and will see a balance of people speaking each language;again maintaining in a sense, the equal importance of both.

The generic specialist is fundamental in the composition of personnel.She/he need not be bilingual since both classtoom teachers are and will be able to adjust,alter or create materials and activities for children with special needs which take into account

the childs ethnicity,language and other experiences. The relationship which is established between the specialist and the bilingual teachers will hopefully sensitize this person to the needs of children with special needs who are also culturally and linguistically different.

The classroom volunteers who would hopefully be parents of children with special needs(who are not in this class) would be an important resource in sensitizing the rest of the staff to the needs of children like their own.They would be instrumental in providing valuable information regarding specific situations with which they may be more familiar.They are also liasons,as are the paraprofessionals,between the communities and the school so that there is constant flow of ideas and input from one point to the other. It provides a means of having active community participation in the schools under this system which for the most part does not encourage this and operates schools in a highly secretive manner.

RATIONALE FOR CLASS ORGANIZATION:

Period X:

The rationale for instruction and group composition in period X is based on psycholinguistic theory.It was previously mentioned that the childs' language,the one he brings to school,is fundamental in the learning

process for it is this language which expresses all his past experiences.It is the language he/she uses to express his thoughts.When the child enters school he/she brings all the basic structures and inflections of this language.He has internalized responses to systems of language cues.How does this relate to reading?

> "Reading is a psycholinguistic process.While reading,the reader's thought processes interact with written language,Reading comprehension is message reconstruction.Comprehension depends on the reader's using all the cues available to him."
>
> (Goodman,1968)

The reading process closely parallels listening.

> "Listening utilizes aural language input while reading works from graphis language input,but both produce meaning and both represent interactions between language and thought.They are psycholinguistic processes.Though the inputs are different,both are representations of language. It follows that a child learning to read his native language can draw on the language knowledge and psycholinguistic strategies he uses in listening.It must also follow that resources he has drawn or mastered in oral language will be of great utility in the acquisition of literacy."
>
> (Goodman,1968)

> "Most experts on bilingual education have noted that the crucial variable in a true bilingual program is the extent of use of the child's vernacular and it's role in the curriculum".
>
> (Teacher Talk and Pupil Talk in Bilingual Classrooms)

We shall see that this variable is stresses thru out the class organization to safeguard the production of true bilinguals.

Periods Y,Z,Fr and Fi:

These periods as well as the first have several general purposes as well as specific ones in mind. It will be noted that language use is alternated for each period and only one language can be spoken at a given time.Periods have also been planned so that each child speaks each langaage for the same amount of time each day except for the final period which alternates.Another specific purpose of the planning is to give children the opportunity to interact with all the other children while accomplishing specific tasks which they have selected. Interaction with all classroom personnel is also provided. Requiring teachers to speak each language for equal amounts of time is also stressed. While providing choices in activities for each child in a given period each child is also being exposed to a variety of experiences in various areas.Small groups and individual attention can be provided with the use of the personnel and children also have one period in which they can all share as a group.

The use of learning centers and the class set-up allow for children's selection of activities according to their interest and abilities.The learning centers are designed to provide learning experiences which utilize a variety of learning modalities to insure that the needs of all children are attended to.

What is the importance of these points?

> "From teacher talk children learn the relative importance of each language".
>
> (Teacher Talk...)

So,it must be stressed that teachers speak only in the language assigned to a given period.If there is a disproportionate use of one language children tend to favor that language because they internalize the idea that this is the one that should be used.In classrooms where language used is not assigned to specific periods, there is evidence that teachers tend to speak Spanish consciously and deliberately,while using English in a spontaneous and casual(unmarked) manner.This is communicated to children also. (Schultz,1975)

When the alternate period model and the concurrent translation classroom were studied it was seen that: The alternate periods model produced nearly equal amounts of English and Spanish.In the concurrent translation,English was used 71% of the time.The childrens' production was consistent with the teachers/aides production in both models so it appears that the children"reflected the language choices of the teacher/aides,regardless of the bilingual model used." (Teacher Talk)

Strong control of teacher use of language should then be the key and this seems easier to handle in the alternate period model.

When looking at the concurrent translation model it was also found that the English speaking children produced less Spanish.One reason being that English was spoken 71 % of the time.I also realize that learning Spanish was not considered an asset,so naturally this would occur.In the proposed model all children are encouraged to become bilingual and voluntary placement with parent approval would imply that these parents would value having their children learn a second language. The class atmosphere is designed to encourage this idea. The teacher talk study also revealed that teachers used Spanish with the Spanish speaking children when using warming or accepting statements.On the other hand,English was used to direct, correct or discipline students.This unfortunate use of the languages would be eliminated in the alternate period model.

The alternate period model also reduces the continuos switching back from one language to the other. This tends to develop the use of combination of both languages in one sentence or production of new terminology sometimes referred to as "Spanglish".It becomes a "translation to English or Spanish"situation where neither language is learned adequately.

> "The alternate period model maintains equivalency between both languages,both in teacher talk and in pupil talk."
>
> (Teacher Talk..)

A consistent language model is presented to the child. As has been frequently stated,"an ideal bilingual program affords equal time to the dominant language and to the vernacular of the local ethnic group."(California State Board of Education,1973)

Consistancy in language use cannot be overemphasized. Switching from one language to another as well as use of one language for some purposes helps to attribute more importance to one language or another.(Phillips,1975 and Cohen,1974)

The sequencing and organization of language use in the model is designed to provide learning experiences in the language of the child and at the same time during the day,provide him with exposure to the second language.It is aimed at the development of the second language while he's utilizing the concept already grasped, first in his own language.(Palomares,1972).This exposure to the second language would be much the same as that the child experiences in learning the vernacular.He must first be exposed to the aural-oral and then be introduced to the written language.

The more developed the oral language,the easier the transfer of cues to written language.

> "It is necessary to build concepts from what the child already knows so that he can transfer his oral language to a second language without having to translate back to his first language."
>
> (Maldonado, 1974)

On the other hand,reading in the second language is not introduced until the child can read in his first language.In the first paper I've provided evidence for the need to do this.Cazden(1973) has also documented the fact that children who read in their own language have less trouble reading in the second language. If we go back to our discussion on psycholinguistic theory we see that: if a child relies on cues to give meaning to words and these cues are derived from linguistic patterns,he will have greater difficulty in reading of "getting" the cues of a written language for which he has not internalized the linguistic pattern.

Periods have also been organized in a way so that children will be able to interact with everyone else in the class.The use of learning centers of stations are a response to the demands that individualized instruction places on classroom personnel.Individualized instruction requires different approaches to learning.It demands more materials,developed and arranged with particular concerns for a variety oflevels of difficulty and complexity.It requires provisions for self-direction,for independence and for self-correction. The learning centers are prepared by the staff and are provided so that children can practice and apply skills that have been learned.

Learning centers allow for students to select activities in which thay wish to be involved and permit the staff to work with children individually, in small groups or to observe children in their learning experiences. The continous evaluation of these activities allow for planning and preparing materials according to needs.

SOME EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS:

The ultimate goal of this model is on one hand, to produce truly bilingual students and to fulfill the needs of children with special needs in a ganuinely integrated setting where planning takes into account the individual differences and rates of development of the individuals involved.

It tries to insure "the right to learn" for every child in the class by providing the best possible learning environment.

The model requires continuos evaluation of children's needs and on going planning of materials, experiences, etc. to satisfy these nedds. It implies team work among all personnel and assuming responsabilities for specific tasks. It requires parent and community involvement and understanding of what the program is trying to accomplish as well as agreement with the proposed goals.

It requires well trained and sensitive staff.

The success of such a model implies some substantial changes in attitudes towards a variety of thingd. In the first place we must reconsider what our role and goal as educators is. The idea is to become facilitators in a process that is continously taking place in individuals... ...learning.

Attitudes towards labels or classification of students must be modified so that individuals are not perceived in fragments but as a whole. In viewing an integral and distinct human being we must reconsider our views on testing and evaluation so that the emphasis is placed on criterion referenced tests and evaluation on the assessment of needs.

Education has no been satisfactory for a great proportion of children because education has forced every person into the same non-existent mold and prescribed accordingly.

We must begin to emphasize different learning styles and the potential of each individual.We must consider inter and intra personal differences in learning and living and evaluate,plan and provide according to these differences. We must orient ourselves to process and be willing to accept and deal with new possibilities.Teaching must be individualized in approach and fulfill the needs of the individual whether they be linguistic,cultural or other. In this sense all people are "special".

As Dr,Frierson has suggested,our commitment is to accomodate the widest possible range of differences in our classrooms and to redefine the 3R's. Respect our differences,Recognize the differences that make a differences in learning and to React to these differences by trying

to make "our brains as comfortable as we make our feet".

The ultimate goal is to insure the right to learn" for all children in an environment of respect and acceptance and that means diversifying education to it's fullest potential.

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